3: Hinder G-5 (1933-1942) 1944 AF15 East China AF15

CHAPTER X

CHILD PROTECTION

ANY ADEQUATE PROGRAMME for the protection of children by the authorities in Shanghai seemed in the past to present almost insuperable problems. The evolution of policy in the general field of child welfare involved difficulties of finance and other obstacles sufficient to deter the stoutest heart. The high birth rate and the size of the population even in normal times meant that the city had a child population as large as that of some small countries. Housing congestion and unhygienic living quarters, together with inadequate nutrition, traceable in part to the low earnings of workers, caused literally thousands of children to live under conditions that contributed to a high death rate. If they survived they suffered in many cases chronic ill-health. If conditions were hard for the children of wage earners, they were harder still for those in families where there was unemployment, and for those who had no one to care for them.

The type of child welfare programme familiar abroad, where governments are aware of the necessity of caring for the citizens of the future and ready to appropriate large funds for that purpose, was not in the past considered possible in the International Settlement of Shanghai. The sources of the Council's income, ultimately dependent on the capacity of the people to pay, were strictly limited. The Council took the general view that "poor relief" was not feasible, since it had no control over entrance to the Settlement.[1] In practice, however, certain forms of relief were undertaken from Council funds. The Council for years made limited contributions as grants-in-aid to institutions which cared for children coming into the hands of the police—children who were lost, abandoned, abducted, exploited, ill-treated or otherwise victims of circumstance. Indeed, for long the police in Shanghai were the social workers of the Settlement. Police stations saw many a human drama in which children were concerned. Police rescued

[1] See Chapter XI.

census reports, the Communist press cites such cases as that of Ai-ling and Sheng-li hsiang in Chiang-ning hsien, Kiangsu Province.[5] From June 1951 through June 1953 in these two village groups the average birth rate was 33.64 per thousand, or 3.36 per cent, and the average death rate was 1.93 per cent. The natural increase thus was 1.43 per cent, somewhat lower than the national average of 2 per cent given in the communique announcing the official results of the 1953 census. On the other hand, a higher average of 2.7 per cent was reported after a survey conducted during 1952-53 by the municipal government of Chiang-ning hsien in co-operation with the Department of the Interior of the Central People's Government and the Revolutionary Military Committee, using as a cross-section 29 municipalities, 5 hsien, 2 hsiang, and one village. There appears to be some grounds for the Peking claim of 99.5 per cent accuracy for the 1953 census. The population increase in the East China Region, judging by the few scattered samples reported in the Communist press, seems to be well within the general pattern of the nation as a whole.

Another comparison may be made of earlier census figures and those for 1953. The result tends to show that Peking is exercising considerable discretion in claiming the 2 per cent average rate of increase. Although, when we examine the following table such a study may help to ascertain the validity of Peking's claim,

5. Jen-min Jih-pao (People's Daily), Peking March 11, 1954.